



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Dolores Ranger District
San Juan National Forest

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File Code: 1950
Date: June 24, 2020

Dear Interested Party:

The Dolores Ranger District of the San Juan National Forest has released a *revised* draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the *Rico Trails Project*.

The proposed project consists of new motorized and non-motorized trails and existing trail reroutes on U.S. Forest Service lands in the vicinity of Rico, Colorado. A 3.4-mile new single-track motorized trail would provide a connection between Stoner and Taylor Mesas. In conjunction with the new Spring Creek Trail construction, 7.8 miles of non-motorized trail would be decommissioned. Two new non-motorized trails (Rio Grande Southern – 4.4 miles and Circle Trail – 2.6 miles) would provide connection to existing trails and loop opportunities. The existing Ryman Creek Trail would be re-aligned to provide a more sustainable and accessible trail.

There are two changes from the original proposed action considered in the draft EA:

- The Ryman Creek Trail would have a seasonal closure from May 15 to June 30 to improve habitat conditions for elk production
- The existing segment of the Stoner Creek Trail between East and West Twin Spring Trails would remain open as currently designated

To consider the new proposed action a *revised* draft EA has been released for public review. The district invites your input on the analysis of these proposed trails.

The *revised* draft EA describes the proposed action in more detail and provides a summary of potential effects of the project on various resources. The *revised* draft EA, along with other project documents, are available for review at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=56748>. For more information on the project, contact Tom Rice (see below).

For this project, compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) are being conducted concurrently. In order to better involve the public in the NHPA process, NEPA notification letters and public legal notices which invite public comment as part of the NEPA process also serve to notify and invite public comment on the proposal as stipulated by NHPA.

How to Comment and Timeframe

The *Rico Trails Project* would implement the San Juan National Forest's existing Land and Resource Management Plan; it is subject to the objection process pursuant to 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B. The public is encouraged to provide specific written comments (§218.2) on



this proposal for the responsible official to consider. Specific written comments are within the scope of the proposed action, with a direct relationship to the proposed action, and include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider.

Written comments will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of a legal notice in The Cortez Journal. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period (anticipated date June 24, 2020). The regulations prohibit extending the length of the comment period.

Only those who submit timely and specific written comments during this formally designated comment period will have eligibility to file an objection under §218.8. Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted timely, specific written comments regarding the proposed project unless based on new information arising after the designated comment opportunity. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to object must meet the information requirements in §218.25(a)(3), including that each individual or representative from each entity submitting written comments must provide the name and postal address of the individual or entity submitting the comment, and either sign the comment or verify identity upon request. Names, contact information, and the comments will become part of the public record and may be released under the Freedom of Information Act.

Comments must be received by the end of the comment opportunity and may be submitted as follows:

Electronic comments can be submitted through the electronic comment form located on the project webpage - <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=56748>

Mail to either Tom Rice, Recreation Program Lead, or Derek Padilla, District Ranger, Dolores Ranger District, Attention: Rico Trails Project, 29211 Hwy 184, Dolores, CO 81321; (970) 882-7296.

Fax (970) 882-0175, Attn: Derek Padilla.

Thank you for interest in the project and the management of the San Juan National Forest.

Sincerely,



DEREK J PADILLA
District Ranger